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The Review of Religions

Edited by A. Q. NIAZ, B.A.

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 8

August, 1939

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BOOK DEPOT, QADIAN, Pb., India

Printed at the Ripon Printing Press, Bull Road, Lahore, by Mirza Mohd. Sadiq and published by Sheikh Abdur Rahman Qadiani for Sadar Anjuman-i-Ahmadiyya Qadian, Punjab, India

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Review of Religions

Vol. XXXVIII AUGUST 1939 No. 8

نحمدہٗ ونصلی علیٰ رسولہ الکریم

REFLECTIONS OF TAMBARAM

"A group of over twenty delegates of the Tambaram Conference found themselves together on a liner. They arranged to meet every day to discuss the topics of that Conference. Central and West Africa, Egypt, India, Asia and South America were represented."[1]

This informal discussion, presumably more frank, more penetrating and outspoken than deliberations in formal big gatherings are usually allowed to become must have been of great benefit to those who had the good luck to participate in it. But the opportunity was so priceless, and the idea so novel, withal so natural, that a detailed account of the discussion as it proceeded day by day, expanded and grew in scope and vision (as indeed it must have done under the inspiration of minds rich in experience and the practical patient study of problems on the field, all fresh from contact with many more such men) would be a thing of unique value to students of religion—particularly those interested in the Christian Missionary effort to proselytize the whole world. Having read the article that has induced this comment one is left wondering whether such an account has been prepared or, at any rate, notes taken down to be amplified and presented to the world at leisure. We are not aware that

1. "Talks on Tambaram," *World Dominion*, July 1939.

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this larger possibility has so far not occurred to the writer of this article; but in case it has not, we should like to suggest that he has to hand valuable material for producing an instructive little volume reflecting the reaction upon the minds of the delegates of the deliberations of the Conference, the Tambaram atmosphere and the impact of ideas between missionaries assembled together from far-flung, varied fields. This aspect of the book would make it go well as a valuable supplement with the official report of the Conference expected early in the autumn.

The article in the *World Dominion*, though too brief to serve the wider and bigger purpose hinted above, is, nevertheless, of considerable value even as it stands. It is reflective, and remarkably honest on points concerning which many a missionary, cast in less superior mould, would not be quite so frank :

> "Another thought that came to many of us on hearing national leaders speak of their problems was that, when it comes to the application of Christianity to the ways of living, we of the West have not so much to contribute as we fondly imagine."

The need for more missionaries, of course, was naturally felt by all and emphasised by all. It is much to the credit of the various missions in the field that they think only of expansion although results in many countries are poor and the general drift of tendencies in the religious sphere rather discouraging :

> "It was interesting to note that the indigenous Church leaders were all emphatic on the need for *more* missionaries. They insisted that the task of the church was merely begun, it was very, very far from being within reach of completion. It was so great, in fact, as to be beyond the resources of any indigenous church they knew. This found equal emphasis whether it was South America, Africa, Egypt and Muslim lands generally, or India, and, in short any other part of the field. 'There are *more* non-Christians in the world to-day than there were ten years ago.' That, it was said, described most situations con-

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fronting the Churches represented. It is in fact as serious as this: that the Christian Church lives and works to-day in an environment which is steadily growing more non-Christian."

Among Indians the complaint was heard:

"That the missionary tended to 'stay put,' whatever happened to the Church, especially in the case of small missions who also had a weak idea of the place of the Church. Missionaries were needed, badly needed, but so often to-day they were appointed to a particular station or to an empty bungalow rather than to a new outpost of growing work. One half, at least, of the areas of India called for the opening of new work, yet the missionary force had been more or less stationary for the last ten years. Mission and Church, it was said, tended to operate in the same area, and often there was an undefined relationship between them. The Church of India and the Methodist Episcopal Church had planned a closer relation between Church and Mission, but there were still many problems unsolved. The London Missionary Society in South India had placed its six districts in Travancore under Indian Superintendents. Many changes were taking place indicating attempts to meet the changing situation but still the need of *more* missionaries and a new strategy of evangelization was felt by all."

The need for more missionaries is easy to understand because the field is so vast, but emphasis on the need for a new strategy, is rather puzzling. As long as the energy put in continues to yield an appropriate return, one does not usually talk of the need of a new strategy.

"Our group never got away from the problem of the unfinished task and the best approach to it. As discussion developed, the claims of altogether unoccupied regions were set over against those of areas, better known, bordering on, or interspersed between, the present Mission and Church fields. It was felt that the first should not be neglected, but there were often peculiar difficulties of climate, language and politics which made it impossible for these areas to be approached by pioneer groups and inexperienced missionaries. Great loss had been incurred

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and little progress made through such efforts. The Churches and their workers in co-operation with older experienced Missionaries are best fitted to attempt these more difficult tasks. It was realised that the problem of the second, or 'occupied' fields, yet unreached, or inadequately worked, needed a fresh approach. (1) Missions who laid claim to them should define the regions which they could reasonably hope to occupy. (2) Other missions, preferably of similar views, should be directed to these areas. (3) The Church should be encouraged to take over more of these areas as its evangelistic field. (4) The Church and Mission should set up joint evangelistic councils for further evangelism. (5) While a thinly spread evangelism might cover a large district by an annual visit or so, this could not be called occupation, and while as large an area as possible should always be covered, the work should be thoroughly done."

With regard to work in Muslim countries Tambaram seems to have recognised that no progress was being made :

> "In Muslim lands where there was no marked response, it was felt that there should be wide spread witness, and wherever intensive work was possible, it should be centred round the dispensary and the school. It was thought vitally important that men's and women's work should be closely co-ordinated."

The dispensary and the school, however, are weapons which necessitate a most severe and heart-searching introspection with regard to motive on the part of those who use them. If medical relief and school work is undertaken solely, or even chiefly, to win converts by these means, the work can easily degenerate into something immoral due to the hidden artifice underneath. The doctor and the teacher win for themselves a place in the heart of those they help and teach which can never be won by a plain "missionary" intent on gaining converts. Mission work done through hospitals and schools is like disarming your adversary in friendship and then shooting him "through the heart" from behind before he knows what is happening.

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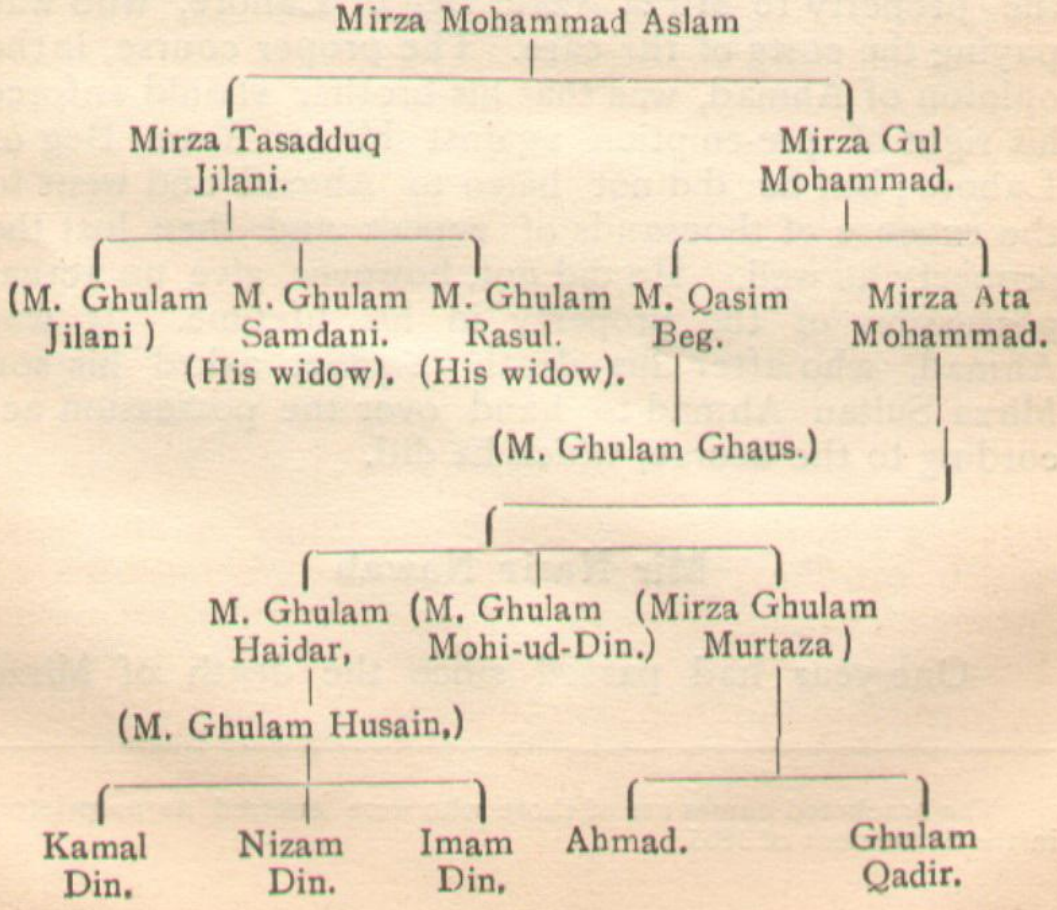
AHMAD AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER

By spending a very great sum of money out of his own pocket, Mirza Ghulam Murtaza had succeeded in regaining proprietory rights over Qadian and a few adjoining villages. But through the simplicity of his Mukhtar, the names of all his relations were also entered on the Government papers as proprietors. They had refused to join Mirza Ghulam Murtaza in his efforts to regain the ancestral estate, because they had no hope whatsoever of any success; and had, therefore, not contributed anything towards the expenses involved. They had, as a matter of fact, clearly told him that if he gained anything it would be his own property, and that they would have no rights over it. Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, therefore, remained in actual possession of the property as long as he lived and nobody had the courage to demand anything from him. But after his death* they brought a law suit against

*According to the Settlement of 1865, the estate was divided into five parts; two fifths belonged to the descendants of Mirza Tassadduq Jilani, two fifths to the children of Mirza Gul Mohammad, and one fifth belonged to Mirza Ghulam Murtaza as the managing proprietor. To make this clear, I give here a portion of the pedigree tree :-



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Mirza Ghulam Qadir and Ahmad to enforce their legal right of possession at the instigation of Mirza Imam Din.

Ahmad prayed to God for success against the plaintiffs, but he received a revelation to the effect that God would accept his prayers except those in the case of his relations. At this Ahmad gathered together all the members of his family and communicated to them the Will of God, which had been revealed to him; and he tried to dissuade his brother from entering into any further litigation. But Mirza Ghulam Qadir was so convinced of his success that he did not pay much attention to Ahmad's advice. The excuse he put forward was that a lot of money had already been spent; and if Ahmad had advised him earlier, the proceedings could have been stopped. The first Court decided the case in his favour; but the Chief Court decided against him, and he had to pay all the costs. It was a great shock and a bitter disappointment to him. As a matter of fact, the descendants of Mirza Tassadduq Jilani and Mirza Ghulam Ghaus had sold their share of the property to Mirza Azam Beg of Lahore, who was paying the costs of the case. The proper course, in the opinion of Ahmad, was that his brother should enforce his right of pre-emption against Mirza Azam Beg of Lahore; but he did not listen to Ahmad and went to the expense of thousands of rupees and then lost the property as well. He did not, however, give up actual possession of the property in his lifetime. It was Ahmad, who after his death in 1883, asked his son Mirza Sultan Ahmad to hand over the possession according to the decree, which he did.

Mir Nasir Nawab

One year had passed since the death of Mirza

The bracketed names are of those who were entered as proprietors in the Settlement of 1865.

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Ghulam Murtaza, and Mir Nasir Nawab* was again posted near Qadian. Mir Nasir Nawab of Delhi was a government servant who worked in the Canal Department. He had worked near Qadian before in connection with the canal which runs on the west side of Qadian. As in those days Mirza Ghulam Qadir also did some work on the same canal, Mir Nasir Nawab became acquainted with him. Mir Sahib's wife was once indisposed; and Mirza Ghulam Qadir suggested to him that he should consult his father, who was an experienced physician at Qadian, Mir Sahib accordingly brought his wife to Qadian and consulted the Mirza Sahib, who then gave a prescription and also talked with the Mir Sahib about his visit to Delhi for the study of medicine.

The Mir Sahib and his wife saw Ahmad also for the first time while he was reading the Holy Quran in a small room on the ground floor. Little did they realise the full significance of their short visit to Qadian at that time. They came there to consult a physician; and, having done so, went away. But this acquaintance proved to be the seed of a most intimate relationship between the two illustrious families. The glimpse they had of the son of their physician was a glimpse of their own future son-in-law. Anyhow, when they came a second time to Qadian, Mirza Ghulam Murtaza had died a year before and this time it was again at the suggestion of Mirza Ghulam Qadir. They were staying at Tatla, a tiny little village near Qadian. Mirza Ghulam Qadir offered them his own house at Qadian saying that Tatla was not in any way a suitable place for them. He himself used to live at Gurdaspur and said that as Ahmad did not come in the house much they would feel no awkwardness there. The Mir Sahib agreed and came to Qadian. Mirza Ghulam Qadir used to bring them little presents when

*The Mir Sahib belonged to the most distinguished Sayyad family of Delhi and was descended through the daughter of the well-known saint, Khwaja Mir Dard. This family was granted a great Jagir by the Chaggatai rulers on account of its high traditions of nobility. Some ruling families like that of Loharu, gave their daughters in marriage to members of this family. The fact that Khwaja Mir Dard gave his daughter in marriage to this family is also a proof of the eminent position and the respect which it enjoyed in those days.

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he came home from Gurdaspur, and Mir Sahib and his wife used to reciprocate his kindness. One day a few *shami kababs* (a special dish of roast meat usually minced and prepared with spices) were prepared. They were being sent to Mirza Ghulam Qadir, but he had gone away. So the *kababs* were sent to Ahmad, his younger brother, who duly appreciated this act of kindness and thanked them profusely, saying that he enjoyed them very much. This led to further acts of kindness on the part of Mir Sahib and his wife. But when the wife of Mirza Ghulam Qadir came to know of it she was very much upset, for she was ill-disposed towards Ahmad in those days. She was the master of the household, therefore Ahmad had to put up with much inconvenience and discomfort at home. But he bore everything with equanimity, patience and fortitude.

Ahmad had to suffer the pinch of want, even in the necessities of life. Though he was entitled to an equal part of the property bequeathed by his father, yet seeing the fondness of his brother for the things of this world, he never demanded his share, and remained content with bare food and clothing, and thus without being compelled by the law Ahmad gave willingly his cloak to those who asked of him only his coat. On one occasion Ahmad requested his brother to give him a small sum of money to subscribe to a certain newspaper, but it was refused with the remark that it was an extravagance. This attitude of his brother gives an idea of the hardships that Ahmad willingly underwent; and thus he shared the poverty common to all the saints.

The Mir Sahib and his wife were very much impressed with the purity and piety of Ahmad's character, and amongst themselves sometimes spoke very highly of his various virtues.

It has already been mentioned that Mirza Imam Din had made an abortive attempt to kill Mirza Ghulam Murtaza. It appears that there was bad blood between the two branches of the family. The strength and power of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza kept, however, all the turbulent elements under control; and his

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behest to his eldest son Mirza Ghulam Qadir was that he should beware of them. But when he died, Imam Din, as has been mentioned before, instigated the relations and litigation was started in the open. Consequently, Ahmad's cousins remained a constant scource of trouble to him. In fact, they proved the bitterest of his enemies. I cannot go here into any details; but it must be remembered that they were really a wicked people. They indulged in every vice, and had no scruples. Their worst characteristic was that they ridiculed religion, and did not believe in God. And it was this that kept them always at daggers drawn with Ahmad. They laughed and jeered at him and did everything to obstruct his work. Hence the wife of Mirza Ghulam Qadir, Hurmat Bibi who was a sister of Imam Din, did not like Ahmad much. And, in fact, it was due to these strained feelings that Ahmad was indifferent to his own wife, Hurmat Bibi, the mother of Mirza Sultan Ahmad. Her brother (Mirza Ali Sher) was married to the sister of Mirza Ahmad Beg, Imam Din's brother-in-law. Fazal Ahmad was also married to the daughter of M. Ali Sher. Her own leanings were also towards Imam Din and his party. She had no interest in religion at all; and was always carried away by the dominating wave of godless ridicule which Imam Din and his friends ceaselessly levelled upon religion and Ahmad. Therefore Ahmad could not possibly get on with her. He never saw her and for all practical purposes lived a single life. He continued, however, to give her in every respect a proper maintenance. The righteous are ever persecuted for the kingdom of Heaven's sake. A true saint rejoices, indeed, that he has been called upon to bear such suffering for the glory of God. And so it was with Ahmad in this respect.

Ahmad was not a man of this world and always shunned coming in touch with its affairs; yet he was not slow in serving the best interests of society. He was on the other hand, ever ready to protect the honour of the weak. There came to Ahmad's town in 1877, a vagabond Sadhu, who began to take his physical exer-

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cises in public, and to make a show of his muscular strength. The credulous Hindus began to look upon him as Hanuman. As a matter of fact he was an utterly immoral loafer and attracted round him all the wicked people of the neighbourhood. An Arya, Kishen Singh, used to read medicine with Ahmad. He came to him and said that the elder Mirza, Ahmad's father, was dead, and that Mirza Ghulam Qadir his elder brother had entered service, therefore, they could not do anything in the matter and that nothing could be expected of Ahmad because he never took any interest in such affairs. Thereupon Ahmad asked Kishen Singh what had happened. He told Ahmad about the Sadhu and the immoral influence that he was exerting all round. Ahmad was moved to action and immediately sent for the Chaukidar of the village and ordered the Sadhu to leave Qadian immediately. The order was given in such authoritative and determined tone that no one could say anything, and the Sadhu had to leave at once. He thus proved that righteousness is power.

Once Ahmad had an attack of قولنج زحیری and his condition became critical. Sh. Rahim Bakhsh, father of Maulvi Mohammad Husain, came from Batala to inquire after his state. It seemed to be an epidemic. Ahmad went frequently to the stools. Blood came every time; and he became so extremely weak that there appeared no hope of his recovery. His relations were almost in despair. After 16 days God revealed a treatment to Ahmad, and it was this: To put his hands into a cupful of river water, mixed with its sand; and, repeating a prayer in Arabic, rub it on his hands, face, chest and back. The process was started and it had a wonderful effect. He was feeling a burning sensation all over his body; but the rubbing gave him such immediate relief that he recovered in a few minutes.

Ahmad's Appearance in Public

When the views of Dayanand Saraswati, a

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Gujerati Brahman, (born 1825), met with scanty acceptance among the Brahmans to whom he introduced them, he turned to the masses and established Samajes in various parts of India; the first being at Bombay in 1875. Arya Samaj was soon established in the Punjab, and L. Sharampat Rai was the Secretary of the Samaj at Qadian. Mirza Ghulam Qadir had taken over entire charge of the home affairs after the death of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza. Ahmad was, therefore, now free to devote his time wholly to the service of God. Sharampat Rai often met Ahmad and discussed religious matters with him. But the time had now come when Ahmad should come out in public and expose the errors of this newly-established association.

The Arya Samaj published a statement in the *Vakil, Hindustan,* dated 7th December 1877, to the following effect:

"The souls that exist are infinite and so many in number that even God does not know their number; therefore, they will continue attaining salvation for ever and will never cease to exist."

Ahmad considered this a direct insult to the Almighty; and was, therefore, moved to defend the Glory of God. He wrote a series of articles against this belief, which were published in the *Safeer Hind* of Amritsar from 9th February 1878 to 9th March 1878.' He challenged the Samaj to vindicate their position and offered a prize of Rs. 500 to any one who would prove the truth of the above statement. The arguments that Ahmad put forward were so conclusive that L. Jiwan Das, Secretary of the Central Samaj of the whole of the Punjab, was compelled to issue a statement in which he declared that the belief disproved by Ahmad did not form part of the essential principles of the Arya Samaj. He went even further. He said in the statement, published in the same paper, that members of the Arya Samaj did not consider themselves the followers of Dayanand. They did not

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believe all that Dayanand said, unless it was reasonable. This was a blow at the Founder of the Arya Samaj* himself, who did not come forward to defend his position. Neither could he give any reply to Ahmad's articles. He had to declare, on the other hand, that the number of souls was not really infinite; but that the perpetual transmigration of souls was true. He invited Ahmad to a debate on the point through a letter, and also sent three members of the Samaj for this purpose. The invitation was promptly accepted by Ahmad; and in an open letter, dated 10th June, 1878, addressed to Dayanand, the acceptance was published in the *Brother Hind* of Lahore, dated July, 1878. This journal was edited by Pandat Shiv Narain Agni Hotri, who commented as follows:—"So far the Arya Samaj have staunchly believed, according to the teachings of Dayanand based upon the authority of the Vedas, that the number of souls is infinite, but it now appears from Ahmad's letter that when he refuted this doctrine, Dayanand was at last compelled to declare that the number of souls is not infinite, even though transmigration of souls is true. Anyhow, what we wish to remark here is (1) Dayanand had convinced his followers, on the authority of the Vedas, that the number of souls was infinite and that they were self-existing; and now, when this belief has been refuted, his confession that the souls are really not infinite clearly shows that Dayanand is going against the Vedas. (2) If the Vedas really teach what Dayanand

*Bawa Narain Singh Vakil, Secretary Arya Samaj, Amritsar, made a confused attempt to answer Ahmad in the *Aftab Panjab*, Lahore. He also suggested an amusing correction in the *Safeer Hind*, dated 23rd February 1878 to the effect that the word 'fine' should be used in place of 'prize' and that Ahmad should satisfy him as to his capacity to pay the amount of Rs. 500. Ahmad promptly made a fitting reply and declared that he was fully prepared to accept the conditions of Bawa Narain Singh. It is significant that Ahmad included the name of Dayanand himself in the list of Judges who were to decide the award of Rs. 500, with a detailed statement giving reasons for their decision. Nothing further was, however, heard from Bawa Narain Singh.

Munshi Gurdiyal, a teacher in the middle school, Chiniot wrote an article in the *Aftab Panjab*, dated 16th May, 1878. In it he dealt with the Samajist belief regarding all souls being uncreated. As he addressed Ahmad in his article, Ahmad had to write a reply which silenced the Munshi for ever.

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has now declared, it is certainly a serious reflection upon his position as a leader, in so far as he can draw two contradictory teachings from the Vedas. (3) If the Vedas are silent on the point, it is a reflection upon the Vedas....."

The Editor also asked Bawa Narain Singh, Secretary of the Samaj, Amritsar, whether he would now support Dayanand in contradicting his own teachings as he had done before in endorsing his previous teachings. The Bawa would not reply.

This gives us further evidence of the wonderful manner in which the spirit of God's wisdom descended upon Ahmad in support of his ministry; for, like Christ before him, he was enabled to refute the errors of false authority and of those wise only in the imagination of their own conceit.

Malawa Mal was another Hindu who came in touch with Ahmad. The association began like this. One day Malawa Mal came to the Masjid Aqsa with his teacher, M. Peer Mohammad. Ahmad was there to offer Isha prayers. On being asked, Peer Mohammad told Ahmad that he was the son of L. Sohan Lal of Qadian. Ahmad had a short conversation in which he spoke to Malawa Mal of the beauties of Islam. After a few days he chanced to meet Ahmad near his house, and Ahmad asked Malawa Mal to come and see him occasionally. In a few months they became well acquainted with each other. Malawa Mal says that he liked the company of Ahmad because he was a righteous man and there was always an intellectual and moral atmosphere about him. The life of a good man is really the most eloquent lesson of virtue. For some time, Malawa Mal met Ahmad every day after Zuhr prayers in the Masjid Aqsa, and then after morning prayers. Apart from religious converse, Ahmad used to tell moral stories. Sometimes they had an argument on some religious point but there never was anything of bitterness in it. The stories he told were from *Masnavi Maulana Rum* or *Tazkiratul Auliya*.

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In 1877 or 1878, Ahmad wrote an article against the Arya Samaj, and in support of the superiority of Islam over other religions. He sent it in an open packet to the Vakil Press at Amritsar for printing. In this open packet he also put a letter to the Manager of the Press. Sending a letter in an open packet like this was an offence in those days, and its punishment was a fine of Rs. 500 or imprisonment for six months. This was according to Act 14 of 1866, sections 12 and 56 and the Government of India Notification No. 2442, dated 7th December 1877, Section 43. The Press belonged to Rulya Ram Vakil, who was a fanatical Christian. Seeing Ahmad in the clutches of the law, Rulya Ram lost no time in setting the law in motion against him, and summoned him to Gurdaspur. Ahmad consulted lawyers for the defence. They all advised him that the only way in which he could escape from the clutches of the law was by telling a lie, and by denying that he had put the letter in a packet. Ahmad, however, resolutely refused to say anything but the truth. No considerations could, in his view, justify the sacrifice of truth, which ought to be sovereign in all the relations of life. Thereupon, Sh. Ali Ahmad, pleader, who was engaged by Ahmad, refused to argue his case. But Ahmad was no moral coward; he appeared alone before a British Magistrate to defend himself. His 'armour was his honest thought, and simple truth his utmost skill'. He told the truth to the Court, and nothing but the truth. He explained his action by adding that he did not think that the contents of the letter were of a private nature, as there was nothing in it except what related to the subject-matter of the article, and that he had no intention of causing any financial loss to the Post Office. Truth went home to the Magistrate's heart; and the arguments and eloquence of the prosecuting lawyers proved of no avail. Ahmad was, therefore, acquitted at Dina Nagar because he valued truthfulness more highly than any other quality. He was courageously truthful, dutiful and manly.

Pandat Kharak Singh, a member of the Arya

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Samaj, Amritsar, came to Qadian in 1878 and wanted to hold a debate with Ahmad. It was therefore settled that the subject of the debate should be 'Transmigration,' and a comparison of the Vedas with the Quran. Accordingly, Ahmad wrote a paper, which was read out in a public meeting held for the purpose. The Pandat tried to make an answer, but felt unequal to the task and returned to his home, where he wrote to Ahmad that he would like to continue the debate through the columns of a newspaper. Ahmad promptly notified his willingness and suggested that the columns of *Safeer Hind*, or *Brother Hind*, or *Arya Darpan* might be used for the purpose. He also proposed that Rajab Ali, a Christian Missionary, and Pandat Shiv Narain, a Brahm Samajist, be appointed as Judges of the debate, so that it might draw the attention of the public and make it more interesting, useful and authoritative. In publishing his paper, Ahmad addressed the following persons also: Pandat Kharak Singh, Pandat Dayanand, Bawa Narain Singh, Munshi Jiwan Dass, Munshi Kanahiya Lal, Munshi Bakhtawar Singh, Editor *Arya Darpan*, Babu Sarda Parsad, Munshi Sharampat of Qadian, and Munshi Indarman. He also promised a prize of Rs. 500. The paper covered fourteen pages of print, and contained six reasons which prove that God is the Creator of the Universe, that human souls are not coexistent with God, and that they are all created by God. Hence the theory of Transmigration, which is based upon the above, cannot hold good.

I cannot say what the others did in answer to Ahmad; Pandat Kharak Singh appeared to have become thoroughly disgusted with the Arya teachings. After some time he openly accepted Christianity, and wrote several pamphlets against the Arya teachings. He never confronted Ahmad again as long as he lived, in spite of his being challenged.

Dayanand wrote in his book *Satyarth Parkash* that Muslims called his co-religionists Hindus by way of contempt because the word 'Hindu' means a thief in Persian. As it was a very mischievous suggestion,

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Ahmad wrote an article which was published in the *Vakil*, Amritsar, in 1879 or 1881, and in this he refuted the idea and showed that the word 'Hindu' was used to denote Indian long before the inception of Islam itself. He gave quotations from the pre-Islamic literature of Arabia to show this use of the word 'Hindu'. He was supported by Mahesh Chand and Rev. Thomas Howell of Pind Dadan Khan, who also wrote articles in the press on the subject.

In 1879 Ahmad had a discussion with Shiv Narain Agni Hotri on the question of 'Inspiration'. Several letters on the subject were exchanged, and it appears that they were also published later in the papers.

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PROPHET MOHAMMED

Recently an article on the Prophet of Islam appeared in a book called *One Hundred Great Lives*, published by the Home Library Club (Bombay and Calcutta). It is written by a person whose identity is not revealed but it contains amazing statements about the life of the Prophet of Islam. There are quotations in the article, but to avoid their accuracy being tested nowhere reference is given to the authorities from where these have been taken. It is full of misstatements, half truths and quotations taken out of their context to suit the prejudice of the writer.

I am very thankful to the authorities of the club that they have (on my protest) expungned the objectionable article from the book and have agreed to open the columns of the *Good Books*—the member's magazine—for a correction of the statements made in the article.

In this article I shall try to show briefly, mostly from eminent Christian writers (who cannot be accused of any partiality to the Prophet), the character of the Prophet of Islam, his teachings and his achievements.

Prophet Mohammed was born at Mecca about the 29th August 570 A.D. His father died some days before his birth. When he was six years old his mother Amina also died. His grandfather Abdul Muttalib first took him under his protection and on his death he was committed to the charge of his uncle Abu Talib. At the age of twelve he went with his uncle on a business trip to Syria and during this tour he visited Jerah, Amman and other places.

Sir William Muir in his *Life of Mohammed* says, "Our authorities all agree in ascribing to the youth of

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Mohammed a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of Mecca.... Endowed with a refined mind and delicate taste, reserved and meditative, he lived much within himself, and the ponderings of his heart no doubt supplied occupation for leisure hours spent by others of a lower stamp in rude sports and profligacy. The fair character and honourable bearing of the unobstrusive youth won the approbation of his fellow citizens; and he received the title, by common consent, of Al-Amin, "the Faithful."

Soon after his return from Syria Mohammed entered the service of a rich widow, Khadijah, as her mercantile agent to Syria. He performed his duties so well that she offered to marry him. At the age of twenty-five he married Khadijah who was then forty years of age. Having married a rich wife any other man in his place would have led a life of luxury and idleness, but Mohammed spent his time in the service of his people and country, and in deep meditation in the cave of Mount Hira.

At the age of forty he received the first message from God calling on him to fulfil the task an Almighty power was directing him to undertake. His first converts were his wife and his cousin, Ali, his freedman Zaid, his friend Abu-Bakr and a few others.

"It is strongly corroborative," says Muir "of Mohammed's sincerity that the earliest converts to Islam were not only of upright character, but his own bosom friends and people of his household; who, intimately acquainted with his private life, could not fail otherwise to have detected those discrepancies which ever more or less exist between the profession of the hypocritical deceiver abroad and his actions at home."

Mohammed preached the unity of God and brotherhood of mankind. He thus threatened the worship of idols which was very common in Mecca, and he was therefore regarded an enemy by the priestly class which held a tremendous sway over the super-

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stitious and ignorant mass of the people.

"The Koreish had vested interests in the old worship; and their prestige was involved in its maintenance. Mohammed had thus to contend not only with the heathenism of his city sanctified by ages of observance and belief but also with the opposition of the oligarchy which ruled its destinies; and with whom like the generality of the people, superstition was allied to great scepticism."[1] Undaunted by opposition, the Prophet preached his message and worked steadily on. "The hostile Koreish stopped the Prophet from offering his prayer at the Ka'aba; they pursued him wherever he went; they covered him and his disciples with dirt and filth when engaged in their devotions. They incited the children and bad characters of the town to follow and insult him. They scattered thorns in the places which he frequented for devotion and meditation."[2]

As Mohammed by his sublime devotion and example succeeded in getting converts to his new faith, the hostility of the Kuraish increased and they put his followers to horrible tortures. The followers of the Prophet were exposed to the burning heat of the desert on the scorching sand and when reduced to the last extremity by thirst they were offered the alternative of either re-cantation or death. Bilal the first Muezzin of Islam was treated in this way. He was the slave of one Omayya who used to take him every day to Batha in the burning heat of the day, strip him naked and throw him bare-backed on the ground, with his face to the burning sun, and place a large stone on his chest. His only fault was that he had accepted Islam. This torture was repeated every day until he was ransomed by Abu Bakr and set free.

The Prophet was an eye witness to the tortures

1. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 22,
2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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of some of his followers. Unable to see their sufferings he asked some of his followers to go to Abyssinia and seek the protection of the Christian king there, which they did. The Quraish sent a deputation to the king asking for the surrender of these men. "The Negus sent for the exiles, and inquired of them," 'What is this religion for which you have abandoned your former faith and adopted neither mine nor that of any other people?' Jaffar, son of Abu Talib, and brother of Ali, acting as spokesman for the fugitives, spoke thus: 'O king we were plunged in the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols, we lived in unchastity; we ate dead bodies, and we spoke abominations; we disregarded every feeling of humanity, and the duties of hospitality and neighbourhood; we knew no law but that of the strong, when God raised among us a man, of whose birth, truthfulness, honesty, and purity we were aware; and he called us to the unity of God, and taught us not to associate anything with Him; he forbade us the worship of idols; and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful, and to regard the rights of neighbours; he forbade us to speak evil of women, or to eat the substance of orphans; he ordered us to fly from vices, and to abstain from evil; to offer prayers, to render alms, to observe the fast. We have believed in him, we have accepted his teachings and his injunctions to worship God, and not to associate anything with Him. For this reason our people have risen against us, and have persecuted us in order to make us forego the worship of God, and return to the worship of idols of wood and stone and other abominations. They have tortured us and injured us, until finding no safety among them, we have come to thy country, and hope thou wilt protect us from their oppression.'" [3] The king refused to deliver them up.

Their failure still more incensed the Quraish, and increased their hostility. "Like the Phareesis tempt-

3. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 29-30.

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ing Jesus, the Quraish came to Mohammad with temptations of worldly honour and aggrandisement, to draw him from the path of duty."[4] But he refused.

Then the Quraish approached Abu Talib to dissuade the Prophet from his mission. To this the Prophet replied, "Though they set the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left, to persuade me, yet while God bids me, I will not renounce my purpose."[5]

Being thus disappointed and seeing new converts to his faith like Mohammad's uncle Hamza, Omar and others, they resorted to extreme measures and determined to cut off the family of Hashimites to which the Prophet belonged from the rest of the tribes.

"The ban was put rigorously in force. Mohammed and his party found themselves cut off from all supply of corn and other necessaries of life. For three years they lay under the ban, shut up in the ravine. Only at the pilgrimage time, when all violence was sacrilege, could Mohammad come forth and address the pilgrims on the subject of his message. It seemed as if they must all perish; their stores were almost gone, and the cries of starving children could be heard outside.

"At last, the manly bearing of Mohammad under such severe trial and in the face of all discouragement, and his constant success among those of his clans who were shut up with him, shamed the Quraish, and they allowed the prisoners to come forth and mix once more with the rest of the world."[6]

Soon after this, first his uncle Abu Talib and then his loving wife Khadijah died, having been his

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4. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 27.
5. Godfrey Higgins; *Apology for Mohammad*, Introduction xvi-xvii.
6. Godfrey Higgins: *Apology for Mohammad*, xviii-xix.

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companion for twenty-five years. After the death of his uncle Abu Talib, Mohammad's position became more and more critical at Mecca, and the persecution of him and his followers increased until at last he accepted the invitation of some of the people of Medina to go to Medina. The Quraish tried to murder him but he escaped to Medina (622 A.D.). This was the flight to Medina from which the Muslim Era begins. It will not be out of place to give a brief survey of the career of the Prophet at Mecca in the words of Sir William Muir from the *Life of Mohammad*. He says " Few and simple as were the precepts of Mohammad up to this time, his teaching had wrought a marvellous and a mighty work. Never since the days when primitive Christianity startled the world from its sleep and waged mortal combat with heathenism, had men seen the like arousing of spiritual life and faith, suffered sacrifice and took joyfully the spoiling of goods for conscience' sake."

From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The slight and transient influences of Judaism and Christianity, or philosophical enquiry, upon the Arab mind had been but as the ruffling here and there of the surface of a quiet lake ; all remained still and motionless below. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty, and vice. It was a common practice for the eldest son to take to wife his father's widows, whom he inherited with the rest of the estate. Pride and poverty had introduced among them (as they have among the Hindus) the crime of female infanticide. Their religion was gross idolatry ; and their faith a dark superstitious dread of unseen beings whose good-will they sought to propitiate and whose displeasure to avert, rather than a belief in an overruling Providence. The life to come and Retribution of good and evil as motive of action were practically unknown.

" Thirteen years before the Hijra, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years now produced! A band of several hundred

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persons had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of One God, and surrendered themselves implicitly to the guidance of what they believed a Revelation from Him; praying to the Almighty with frequency and fervour, looking for pardon through His mercy, and striving to follow after good works, almsgiving, purity and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the omnipotent power of God, and of His providential care over the minutest of their concerns. In all the gifts of nature, in every relation of life, at each turn of their affairs, individual or public, they saw His hand. And, above all, the new existence in which they exulted was regarded as the mark of His special grace; while the unbelief of their blinded fellow-citizens was the hardening stamp of reprobation. Mohammed was the minister of life to them, the source under God of their new-born hopes; and to him they yielded an implicit submission."[7]

At this time in Medina there were three parties: (1) The Mohajirin, those followers of the Prophet who had come from Mecca; (2) the Ansar, the Helpers of the Prophet in Medina; and (3) the Jews.

The first two were in close alliance with each other and were the bulwark of the Prophet in Medina. The Jews had close business relations with the Kuraish. At first they looked with benevolent neutrality upon the Prophet, but as his popularity in Medina increased the Jews began to conspire against him. On his arrival in Medina, the Prophet concluded a pact with the non-Muslims of that town, the terms of which, defining the position and rights of each party, were reduced to writing. *Inter alia* it provided that "The Jews who attach themselves to our commonwealth shall be protected from all insults and vexations; they shall have an equal right with our own people to our assistance and good offices: the Jews of the various branches of

7. Mr. Godfrey Higgins: *Apology for Mohammed*. Introduction pp. XXXIV to XXXVII.

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'Auf, Najjar, Harith, Jashm, Th'alaba, Aus and all others domiciled in Yathrib, shall form with the Moslems one composite nation; they shall practise their religion as freely as the Moslems; the clients and allies of the Jews shall enjoy the same security and freedom; the guilty shall be pursued and punished; the Jews shall join the Moslems in defending Yathrib (Medina) against all enemies; the interior of Yathrib shall be a sacred place for all who accept this Charter; the clients and the allies of the Moslems and the Jews shall be as respected as the patrons; all true shall hold in abhorrence every man guilty of crime, injustice or disorder: no one shall uphold the culpable, though he were his nearest kin.[8]

"But the Jews would not content themselves with standing aloof; they must need act on the offensive... When asked which they preferred, Islam or idolatry, they frankly avowed that they preferred idolatry. To lie about their own religion and to ridicule another religion that was doing a great and good work around them was not enough for these Jews; they must set their poets to work to lampoon the women of the believers in obscene verse, and such outrages upon common decency, not to say upon the code of Arab honour and chivalry, became a favourite occupation among the Jewish clans.

"These were offences against the religion and the persons of the Muslims. They also conspired against the state. Mohammed was not only the preacher of Islam, he was also the king of Medina, and was responsible for the safety and peace of the city. As a Prophet he could afford to ignore the jibs of the Jews, though they maddened him to fury; but as the chief of the city, the general in a time of almost continual warfare, when Medina was kept in a state of military defence and under a sort of military discipline, he could not overlook treachery. He was bound by his

8. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 59-60.

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duty to his subjects to suppress a party that might (and nearly did) lead to the sack of the city by investing armies. The measures he took for this object have furnished his European biographers with a handle for attack. It is, I believe, solely on the ground of his treatment of the Jews that Mohammed has been called a 'bloodthirsty tyrant:' it would certainly be difficult to support the epithet on other grounds.

"The bloodthirstiness consists in this: some half-dozen Jews, who had distinguished themselves by their virulence against the Muslims, or by their custom of carrying information to the common enemy of Medina, were executed; two of the three Jewish clans were sent into exile, and the third was exterminated—the men killed, and the women and the children made slaves. The execution of the half-dozen marked Jews is generally called assassination, because a Muslim was sent secretly to kill each of the criminals. The reason is almost too obvious to need explanation. There was no police or law-courts or even courts-martial at Medina; some one of the followers of Mohammed must therefore be the executer of the sentence of death, and it was better it should be done quietly, as the executing of a man openly before his clan would have caused a brawl and more bloodshed and retaliation, till the whole city had become mixed up in the quarrel. If secret assassination is the word for such deeds, secret assassination was a necessary part of the internal government of Medina. The men must be killed, and best in that way. In saying this I assume that Mohammed was cognizant of the deed, and that it was not merely a case of private vengeance; but in several instances the evidence that traces these executions to Mohammed's order is either entirely wanting or is too doubtful to claim our credence.

"Of these sentences upon the three whole clans, that of exile, passed upon two of them, was clement enough. They were a turbulent set, always setting the people of Medina by the ear; and finally a brawl followed by an insurrection resulted in the expulsion

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of one tribe; and insubordination, alliance with enemies, and a suspicion of conspiracy against the Prophet's life, ended similarly for the second. Both tribes had violated the original treaty, and had endeavoured in every way to bring Mohammad and his religion to ridicule and destruction. The only question is whether their punishment was not too light. Of the third clan a fearful example was made, *not by Mohammad*, but by *an arbiter appointed by themselves.* When the Kureysh and their allies were besieging Medina, and had well-nigh stormed the defences, this Jewish tribe entered into negotiations with the enemy, which were only circumvented by the diplomacy of the Prophet. When the besiegers had retired, Mohammed naturally demanded an explanation of the Jews. They resisted in their dogged way, and were themselves besieged and compelled to surrender at discretion. Mohammed, however, consented to the appointing of a chief of a tribe allied to the Jews as the judge who should pronounce sentence upon them. The man in question was a fierce soldier, who had been wounded in the attack on the Jews, and indeed died from his wound the same day. This chief gave sentence that the men, in number some six hundred, should be killed, and the women and children enslaved; and the sentence was carried out. It was a harsh bloody sentence, worthy of the episcopal generals of the army against the Albigenses, or of the deeds of the Augustan age of Puritanism; but it must be remembered that the crime of these men was high treason against the state during time of siege; and those who have read how Wellington's march could be traced by the bodies of deserters and the pillagers hanging from the trees, need not be surprised at the summary execution of a traitorous clan" [9]

The punishment accorded to the Jews for their treachery in time of war pales into insignificance with the horrible treatment which is being meted out to

9. Lane Poole: *Speeches and Table-talk of Prophet Mohammed* quoted in Higgin's *Apology for Mohammed* pp. XLVII-LII.

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thousands of Jews in time of peace in Germany and other countries. Hundreds of them have been killed and thousands of them have been banished, their property confiscated, and many more thousands of them are rotting in "Concentration Camps." The recent massacre of hundreds of Abyssinians by Italy in its so-called "mission of civilization," the ill treatment and persecution of "coloured people" in America, South Africa and other places tell their own tale.

With the departure of the Prophet for Medina, the Meccans redoubled their efforts to exterminate the new religion and hatched various conspiracies and incited Arab tribes to war against Islam. These combined forces made various assaults on Medina, and the Prophet in self-defence successfully beat off their attacks. In these battles several prisoners were taken. But they were never "massacred" as alleged by the enemies of the Prophet.

After the battle of Badr a large number of prisoners were taken. Only two of them who had been noted for their virulent animosity and deserved death according to the laws of war among the Arabs, were executed. "The rest of the prisoners, contrary to all the usages and traditions of the Arabs, were treated with the greatest humanity. The Prophet gave strict orders that respect should be paid to their misfortune and that they should be treated with kindness."[10]

Sir William Muir thus writes, "In pursuance of Mahomet's commands the citizens of Medina, and such of the refugees as possessed houses, received the prisoners, and treated them with much consideration. 'Blessings be on the men of Medina!' said one of these prisoners in later days; 'they made us ride, while they themselves walked, they gave us wheaten bread to eat when there was little of it, contenting themselves with dates.'"[11]

10. Amir Ali : *Spirit of Islam*, p. 63.
11. Sir William Muir : *Life of Mahomet*, p. 233.

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Can history show another instance like this even in these days of "civilization"?

This was the Prophet's treatment of the prisoners taken in the war. It is therefore a calumny to say "Mohammed was completely unmoved by the heroism of his enemies, and the massacre of prisoners was the usual sequel to his triumphs" [12]

This is a mere assertion unsupported by any authority. Even a critic like Sir William Muir has admitted that the prisoners were fairly treated because facts were too strong to be ignored.

Another favourite story is about Okba. It is said that when he was being led to execution he said, "who will take care of my little girl?" "Hell fire" said the Prophet of Islam, and at that moment the executioner smote off Okba's head at a blow." [13]

About this the Rt. Hon'ble Sir Syed Amir Ali writes, "This story is so preposterous in itself, so opposed to Mohammed's true character (one of whose noblest traits was his love for children, and who always inculcated love and protection of orphans as an absolute duty, and an act most acceptable to God), that it is hardly necessary to search for its true origin. Christian writers, however, seem to gloat over it, and hence it becomes needful to examine how the story arose.

"It originated most probably from the sobrequet of the *Sibayat-un-Nar* (children of fire), applied to the children of Okba. Okba himself belonged to the tribe of 'Ajlan,' a branch of which inhabited certain valleys near Safra, and were known by the name of *Bani-un-Nar* (children or descendents of fire). The sobrequet was probably derived from this circumstance; and the story of Mohammed's reply from the nickname." [14]

12. Article on Mohammed, *One Hundred Great Lives*, p. 296.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
14. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 65.

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About the Prophet's love for children, and his genial and tender character Lane Poole in his *Speeches and Table-talk of the Prophet Mohammed* says, "There is something so tender and womanly, and withal so heroic, about the man, that one is in peril of finding the judgment unconsciously blinded by the feeling of reverence and well-nigh love that such a nature inspires. He who, standing alone, braved for years the hatred of his people, is the same who was never the first to withdraw his hand from another's clasp; the beloved of children, who never passed a group of little ones without a smile from his wonderful eyes and a kind word for them, sounding all the kinder in the sweet-toned voice. The frank friendship, the noble generosity, the dauntless courage and hope of the man, all tend to melt criticism in admiration."[15]

The Prophet of Islam always enjoined that the old, the weak, women and children should never be molested, and that places of worship no matter to whom they belonged, should in no case be destroyed. Thus he addressed his troops whom he despatched against the Byzantines, "In avenging the injuries inflicted upon us, molest not the harmless inmates of domestic seclusion; spare the weakness of the female sex; injure not the infant at the breast, or those who are ill in bed. Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their subsistence nor their fruit trees; and touch not the palm." Abu Bakr, following his master, thus enjoined his captain: "O Yezid! be sure you do not oppress your own people, nor make them uneasy, but advise with them in all your affairs, and take care to do that which is right and just; for those that do otherwise shall not prosper. When you meet your enemies aquit yourselves like men, and do not turn your backs; and if you gain the victory, kill not little children, nor old people nor women. Destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any

15. Higgin's *Apology For Mohammed*, pp. xci. Lane Poole's *Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammed*.

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mischief to cattle, only such as you kill for the necessity of subsistence. When you make any covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons that live retired in monasteries, who propose to themselves to serve God that way. Let them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries." [16]

I now pass over the various determined attacks which the Quraish and their allies in their frenzy made upon Medina, only to be beaten back each time. In 628 A.D. a ten years truce was concluded with the Quraish, at Hudaibia. The Prophet and his followers were not allowed to perform the *Haj* piligrimage that year, but it was stipulated that they could perform the lesser pilgrimage (Amra) at Mecca next year and remain there for three days with their travelling arms, namely, their "scimitars in sheaths." This pilgrimage is thus described by Sir William Muir. "It was surely a strange sight, which at this time presented itself in the vale of Mecca—a sight, one might almost say, unique in history. The ancient city is for three days evacuated altogether by its inhabitants, and every house deserted. As they retire, the exiles, many years banished from their birthplace, accompanied by their allies, fill the valley, revisit the empty homes of their childhood, and within the short allotted period fulfil the rites of pilgrimage. The ousted citizens with their families, climbing the heights around, take refuge under tents or rocks amongst the hills or glens; and, clustering over the overhanging peak of Abu Kobeis, thence watch the movement of the visitors beneath, as with the Prophet at their head they perform the sacred rites—anxiously scanning every figure, if perchance to recognise among the worshippers some long-lost friend or relative. It was a scene rendered possible only by the throes that gave birth to Islam." [17]

After the conclusion of this peace, the Prophet

16 Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 86-87.

17. Muir: *The Life of Mohammed*, p. 388.

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despatched several envoys to invite the neighbouring sovereigns and other tribes to accept Islam. Two noted embassies were sent to the Emperor Heracleus and to Khusru Parviz, the Kesra of Persia. The latter treated the envoy with contempt and tore the letter of the Prophet to pieces. When news of this was brought to the Prophet, he quietly said, " Thus will the empire of Kesra be torn to pieces." History bears eloquent testimony to the remarkable way in which this prophecy was fulfilled.

A year after the conclusion of the truce the Kuraish and their allies, the Bani-Bakr, in violation of the terms, attacked Bani-Khuza'a who were under the protection of and allies of the Muslims. They massacred a number of them and dispersed the rest. The Bani-Khuza'a then complained to the Prophet. On this the Prophet asked the Meccans to pay blood money, according to the custom of Arabia, for those members of the Bani Khuza'a killed by them and their allies and warned that otherwise the truce would be considered to have come to an end. The Meccans refused to pay the blood money. In order to punish them for this flagrant breach of the treaty the Prophet attacked Mecca at the head of 10,000 followers. The city fell after some resistance. Thus, at last Mohammed entered Mecca as a conquerer. He who had been most inhumanly persecuted, hunted, and driven into exile with a price put upon his head, now came back and had the whole city at his mercy. But in this hour of triumph all the iniquities and sufferings and tortures which he and his followers had suffered were forgotten and with the exception of four men he pardoned every one. Thus writes Lane Poole about this unparalled event in world history, " But what is this ? Is there no blood in the streets ? Where are the bodies of the thousands that have been butchered ? Facts are hard things; and it is a fact that the day of Mohammed's greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Kureysh all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn they had inflicted

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on him: he gave an amnesty to the whole population of Mecca. Four criminals whom justice condemned, made up Mohammed's proscription list when he entered as a conqueror the city of his bitterest enemies. The army followed his example, and entered quietly and peaceably; no house was robbed, no woman insulted....

"It was thus that Mohammed entered again his native city. Through all the annals of conquest, there is no triumphant entry like unto this one."[18]

But all the idols in Ka'aba were destroyed as Islam prohibits idolatry. "The Prophet then delivered a sermon to the assembled people. He dwelt first upon the natural equality and brotherhood of mankind, in the words of the Koran, and then proceeded as follows: 'Descendents of Koreish, how do you think I should act towards you?' 'With kindness and pity, gracious brother and nephew,' replied they. At these words, says Tabari, tears came into the eyes of the Prophet, and he said, 'I shall speak to you as Joseph spoke unto his brothers, "I shall not reproach you to-day; God will forgive: He is the most merciful and compassionate."[19]

Among the Koraish who advanced to take the oath, the Prophet discovered Hinda the wife of Abu Sufyan, the savage woman who had gnawed the heart of Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet after the battle of Ohad. She asked for pardon and she was pardoned. There were many of his bitterest enemies, oponents and persecuters who were now in his complete power, but when they asked for forgiveness they were pardoned. Amongst these was Ikramah, son of Abu Jahel the bitterest enemy of the Prophet who was killed in the battle of Badr. On the Prophet's entry into Mecca Ikramah fled, leaving his newly married wife, who embraced Islam. At her intercession Ikramah was also pardoned.

18. Lane Poole quoted in introduction to Higgin's. *Apology for Mahommed* pp. lxxi.

19. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 96.

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It will be in vain to search for another example of such magnanimity in the hour of triumph when the Prophet had his persecuters absolutely in his power. It is therefore absolutely false to say that, "He no more spared his enemies than deBono spared the Abyssinians in 1935." After the fall of Mecca Islam spread rapidly and tribe after tribe embraced Islam. The Prophet felt that his mission was accomplished, and he made a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca on 23rd February, 632. He addressed the assembled multitude in the following words on 7th March 632. "Ye people, listen to my words, for I know not whether another year will be vouchsafed to me after this year to find myself amongst you at this place."

"Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until ye appear before the Lord, as this day and this month is sacred for all; and (remember) ye shall have to appear before the Lord, Who shall demand from you an account for all your actions... .. Ye people, ye have rights over your wives, and your wives have rights over you...Treat your wives with kindness and love.

"Verily ye have taken them on the security of God, and have made their persons lawful unto you by the words of God." "Keep always faithful to the trust reposed in you and avoid sins." "Usury is forbidden. The debtor shall return only the principal; and the beginning will be made with (the loans of) my uncle Abbas, son of Abdul Muttalib...Henceforth the vengeance of blood practised in the days of paganism (Jahiliyya) is prohibited; and all blood-feud abolished, commencing with the murder of Ibn Rabi'a son of Harith, son of Abdul Muttalib...

"And your slaves! see that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves and clothe them with the stuff ye wear; and if they commit a fault which ye are not inclined to forgive, then part from them, for they

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are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be harshly treated."

"Ye people! listen to my words and understand the same. Know that all Moslems are brothers unto one another. Ye are one brotherhood. Nothing which belongs to another is lawful unto his brother, unless freely given out of good-will. Guard yourselves from committing injustice."

"Let him that is present tell it unto him that is absent. Haply he that shall be told may remember better than he who hath heard it".[20]

The Prophet always used to preside at the public prayers until within three days of his death. On the last Friday he asked Abu Bakr to lead the prayer. This lead to a rumour that the Prophet was dead. On hearing this, leaning on the shoulders of Ali and Fazal, he made his way into the mosque, and after the prayers he thus addressed the congregation: "I have heard that a rumour of the death of your Prophet filled you with alarm; but has any prophet before me lived for ever that ye think that I should not leave you? Everything has its appointed time which is not to be hastened or avoided. I return to Him who sent me, and my last request to you is that ye remain united, that ye love, honour and uphold each other in what is reasonable, that ye exhort each other to faith and constancy in belief, and to the performance of righteous deeds: by these alone men prosper—all else leads to destruction".[21] After this he never appeared again in the public and he died on 8th June 632 A.C.

Thus ended a life consecrated to the service of God and humanity. "Is there another to be compared to his, with all his trials and temptations? Is there another which has stood the fire of the world?—and come out so unscathed? The humble preacher had risen to be the ruler of Arabia, the equal of Chosroes and of

20. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 113-114.
21. Higgin's *Apology for Mohammad*, pp. lxxxvi-lxxxvii.

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Cæsar, the arbiter of the destinies of a nation. But the same humility of spirit, the same nobility of soul and purity of heart, austerity of conduct, refinement and delicacy of feeling, and stern devotion to duty which had won him the title of Al-Amin, combined with a severe sense of self-examination, are ever the distinguishing traits of his character".[22]

The Holy Prophet Mohammad gave to the world a complete code of morals and ethics. He taught that God had raised prophets in every nation. He was one of the prophets, like Moses, Jesus, David, Abraham, etc. A Muslim cannot be a Muslim unless he believes in all the messengers including the Prophet of Islam. Thus in the Quran it is said, "O ye Muslims! Say we believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and in that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and the tribes; and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and (also) in that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinctions between any of them and to Him do we submit".[23]

About the Prophet, Carlyle writes, "Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he was a scheming Imposter, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any one. The lies which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only. When Pococke inquired of Grotius, where the proof was of that story of the pigeon, trained to pick peas from Mahomet's ear and pass for an angel dictating to him, Grotius answered that there was no proof. It is really time to dismiss all that. The word this man spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred-and-eighty millions of men these twelve hundred years. These hundred-and-eighty millions were made by God as well as we. A greater number of God's creatures believe in Mahomet's word at this

22. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 117-118.
23. *The Review of Religions*, vol. 38, No. 3 (Baqr, ruku 6, 112-113).

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hour than in any other word whatever. Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain; this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my part cannot form any such supposition. I will believe most things sooner than that. One would be entirely at a loss what to think of this world at all, if quackery so grew and sanctioned here.

"Alas, such theories are very lamentable. If we would attain to knowledge of anything in God's true creation, let us disbelieve them wholly! They are the product of an age of Scepticism; they indicate the saddest spiritual paralysis and mere death line of the souls of men; more godless theory, I think, was never promulgated in this Earth. A false man found a religion? Why, a false man cannot build a brick house? If he do not know and follow truly the properties of mortar, burnt clay and what else he works in, it is no house that he makes, but a rubbish heap. It will not stand for twelve centuries, to lodge a hundred-and-eighty millions; it will fall straight way. A man must conform himself to Nature's laws, be verily in communion with Nature and the truths of things, or Nature will answer him, 'No, not at all!' Speciosities are specious—ah me!—a Caglostro, many Cagliostors, prominent world eaders do prosper by their quackery, for a day. It is like a forged bank-note; they get it passed out of their worthless hands: others, not they have to smart for it. Nature bursts up in fire flames, French Revolutions and such like, proclaiming with terrible veracity that forged notes are forged.

"But of a great man, especially of him, I will venture to assert that it is incredible he should have been other than true .....

"This Mahomet, then, we will in no wise consider as an Inanity and Theatricality, a poor conscious ambitious schemer; we cannot conceive him so..... The man's words were not false, nor workings here below; no Inanity and Simulacrum. A fiery mass of life cast

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up from the great bosom of Nature herself. To kindle the world; the world's Maker has ordered it so ".[24]

The extraordinary rapidity with which Islam spread has led to the charge that it was propagated by the sword and upheld by the sword. A little consideration will show the falsity of this charge. I shall quote a few verses from the Holy Quran to show that religion is essentially a matter of free choice, and Muslims have been enjoined not to force any one to accept this faith.

" Let there be no compulsion in religion; the right way is in itself distinct from the wrong (Sura ii: 256).

" And if thy Lord pleased, surely those who are in the earth would believe, all of them. Wilt thou then compel men, so that they may believe ". (Sura x: 99).

" Say thou, O ye who believe not! I worship not what ye worship, and ye worship not what I worship; nor will I worship what ye worship: ye have your religion and I have my religion ". (Sura, cix).

Then again as to when Muslims should fight, the principle is laid down in the Quran in the following words:

" As to those who have not fought against you for religion, nor turned you out of your homes, God does not forbid you to be good to them and to act justly toward them; surely God loves the just. God only forbids you to make friends of those who have fought against you for religion, and have turned you out of your homes, and have assisted each other in your expulsion: and whoso makes friends of them these are the unjust ". (Sura ix: 8, 9).

As the Rt. Hon'ble Sayyed Amir Ali says, " Let it

24. Thomas Carlyle on *Heroes and Hero-worship*, lecture II.

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be remembered that these are the utterances, not of a powerless enthusiast or philosophical dreamer paralysed by the weight of opposing forces. These are the utterances of a man in the plentitude of his power, of the head of a sufficiently strong and well-organised State, able to enforce his doctrines with the edge of his reputed sword".[25]

From a brief summary of the life of the Prophet given above it has been made abundantly clear how he put these golden principles into practice even at the moment of his greatest triumphs. I have given above the pact concluded with Jews when the Prophet came to Medina. The charter granted to the monks of the monastery of St. Catherine, near Mount Senai is the most shining example of enlightened toleration:

"By it the Prophet secured to the Christians privileges and immunities which they did not possess even under the sovereigns of their own creed; and declared that any Muslim violating and abusing what was therein ordered, should be regarded as the violator of God's testament, and transgressor of His commandments, and a slighter of his faith. He undertook himself, and enjoined on his followers to protect the Christians, to defend their churches, the residences of theirs priests, and to guard them from all injuries. They were not to be unfairly taxed; no bishop was to be driven out of his bishopric; no Christian was to be forced to reject his religion; no monk was to be expelled from his monastery, no pilgrim was to be detained from his pilgrimage. Nor were the Christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mosques or houses for the Moslems. Christian women married to Moslems were to enjoy their own religion, and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on that account. If Christians should stand in need of assistance for the repair of their churches or monasteries, or any other matter pertaining to religion, the Moslems were to assist them. This was not to be considered

25. Amir Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 212.

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as taking part in their religion, but as merely rendering them assistance in their need, and complying with the ordinances of the Prophet which were made in their favour by the authority of God and His Apostle. Should the Moslems be engaged in hostilities with outside Christians, no Christian resident among the Moslems should be treated with contempt on account of creed. Any Moslem so treating a Christian should be accounted recalcitrant, to the Prophet ".[26]

Not only toleration was preached and practised by the Prophet, but it was also observed by his Caliphs.

Thus the well-known entry of the Caliph Omar into Jerusalem and the saying of his prayers on the steps of the church of Constantine shows how careful he was not to offend religious susceptibilities. The Rt. Hon'ble Sayyed Amir Alit hus describes the remarkable incident, " When the Caliph Omar took Jerusalem, A.D. 637, he rode into the city by the side of the Patriarch Sophronius, conversing with him on its antiquities. At the hour of prayer, he declined to perform his devotions in the church of Constantine ; for, said he, to the Patriarch, ' had I done so, the Musalmans in a future age might have infringed the treaty, under colour of imitating my example ' ".[27]

In spite of all his greatness the Prophet was careful to emphasise that he was only a messenger of God and that he should not be deified like some of the founders of other religions. It is said in the Holy Quran : " I say not to you, I have with me the treasures of God, nor that I know the unseen ; nor do I say to you, I am an angel ; I follow only that which is revealed to me ". (Sura vi : 50).

The results of the teachings of the Prophet have been summarised by Sir William Muir in the following remarkable Passages : " And what have been the

26. Amir Ali : *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 84-85.
27. *Ibid* , p. 220.

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effects of the system which, established by such instrumentality, Mohammed has left behind him? We may freely concede, that it banished for ever many of the darker elements of superstition for ages shrouding the Peninsula. Idolatry vanished before the battle-cry of Islam; the doctrine of the Unity and infinite perfections of God, and of a special all pervading Providence, became a living principle in the hearts and lives of the followers of Mohammed, even as in his own. An absolute surrender and submission to the divine will (the idea embodied in the very name of Islam) was demanded as the first requirement of the faith. Nor are social virtues wanting. Brotherly love is inculcated towards all within the circle of the faith; infanticide proscribed; orphans to be protected, and slaves treated with consideration; intoxicating drinks prohibited, so that Mohammedanism boasts of a degree of temperance unknown to any other creed ".[28]

28. Muir, *The Life of Mohammed*, p. 521, Weir's edition.

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